

SITUATION REPORT NO. 8
INCIDENT NO. 2002-040
DATE: June 30, 2002 TIME: 5:00 p.m.

TO: Governor John Hoeven
State Capitol
Bismarck, N.D. 58505

1. NATURE OF DISASTER: Drought/Fires - Dry conditions in areas of high fuel content have increased fire and drought conditions throughout North Dakota.
2. DEATHS AND INJURIES: Three Emmons County firefighters suffered heat exhaustion on June 29. A N.D. Highway Patrol trooper assisted them

To date, the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has received reports of two fatalities and two other injuries, both of which occurred during response to rural fires.

3. DAMAGES: A complex of three separate grassland fires during the June 29-30 weekend burned through the town of Shields and more than 6,000 acres in the Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation and Sioux and Grant Counties. Only few structures remain in Shields. The town of Porcupine and the surrounding area were evacuated as a precaution. As of 3:00 p.m., June 30, residents remained evacuated. Plans called for reopening roads at 6:00 p.m. The complex is comprised of three blazes: the "Again Fire," near which started west of Selfridge and continued through Shields and Porcupine; the "Bale Fire" near Cannonball; and the "Kenel Fire" near Kenel, South Dakota. On June 29, gusty winds of 30 miles per hour (mph) and temperatures of up to 112 degrees made containment of the complex difficult for firefighters. Cooler temperatures and high humidities during the evening helped with containment efforts. By the morning of June 30, firefighters were able to contain the fires, reinforce lines and secure perimeters. They spent day in mop-up operations, battling "hot spots" of fire.

The North Dakota Rangeland Fire Danger Index, issued June 30 by National Weather Service (NWS), indicated that 17 southwest and south central counties were in the "extreme" category. Those counties include: Golden Valley, Billings, Slope, Bowman, Dunn, Stark, Hettinger, Adams, McLean, Sheridan, Mercer, Oliver, Morton, Burleigh, Grant, Emmons and Sioux. When the index reaches the "extreme" category, fireworks use, open burning and off-road motorized travel are prohibited.

The Again Fire moved from Sioux County into Grant County, jumping the dry Cannonball River. At 2:50 p.m., the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) received reports from on-scene responders that the fire had grown five miles wide and two Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) air resources were in use. The State EOC was notified at 7:20 p.m. that the town of Shields in Grant County had been lost and that assistance was needed from the Highway Patrol to help evacuate the town of Porcupine in Sioux County. Firefighters were able to establish burn lines to protect Porcupine.

The Bale Fire destroyed a house, a barn and grassland and encroached on the town of Cannonball. The fire is located approximately six miles south of Cannonball and three miles north of the Prairie Knights Casino and Lodge in Fort Yates. By late June 29, firefighters had contained, but not controlled, the fire.

The Kenel Fire burned approximately 50 acres; the fire did not threaten Fort Yates.

At 11:30 a.m. June 30, the North Dakota National Guard dispatched two UH-1H "Huey" helicopters, equipped with water buckets, to battle a fire, designated as the "Twin Fire," one mile north of Fort Yates. This fire threatened four homes and burned 400 acres.

On June 28 and 29, the State EOC received reports of other grass fires in Adams, Slope, McIntosh, LaMoure, Emmons, Morton and Burleigh Counties.

4. RESOURCES:

LOCAL: Firefighters from the towns of Solen, Selfridge, Carson, Flasher, Cannonball, Fort Yates and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) are battling the fire complex with assistance from South Dakota firefighters from Mobridge, McLaughlin, McIntosh, Isabel and Watuaga.

Local firefighters and law enforcement officials responded to fires throughout the southwest and south central portions of North Dakota during June 28-30.

STATE: State agencies monitoring fire conditions include the Governor's Office, N.D. Forest Service, the N.D. National Guard, the N.D. Parks and Recreation Department, N.D. Fire Marshal's Office, the N.D. Game and Fish Department, State Radio Communications, the N.D. Department of Human Resources, N.D. Highway Patrol, the N.D. Aeronautics Commission, the N.D. Department of Transportation and the N.D. Division of Emergency Management.

FEDERAL: The U.S. Forest Service dispatched Type III Incident Management Team to the wildfires in Sioux and Grant Counties on June 29. A Type II Incident Management Team was scheduled to arrive late June 30. The fires also required personnel and equipment from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) personnel and equipment. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife provided personnel and three engines.

The National Weather Service (NWS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have been monitoring fire conditions.

5. VOLUNTEER ACTIONS: Prairie Knights Casino and Lodge is sheltering residents of Porcupine and Shields.

The American Red Cross dispatched an Emergency Response Vehicle (ERV) to Fort Yates and Porcupine to provide meals for responders, local EOC staff and fire victims.

6. MAJOR ACTIONS: On June 29, Governor John Hoeven committed all available state resources to assist federal and local firefighters combating the grassland wildfires in Sioux and Grant Counties. The Governor directed officials with the N.D. Division of Emergency Management, the North Dakota Highway Patrol and the North Dakota National Guard to provide these resources.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved funds on June 29 to help pay for fighting fires in the Again Fire Complex. FEMA's Fire Management Assistance Grants help provide resources for suppressing fires by paying 75 percent of eligible state and local costs associated with the fire.

The State EOC and the State Emergency Operations Plan have been activated. Agencies providing support include the Governor's Office, the State Fire Marshal's Office, the N.D. Aeronautics Commission, the N.D. Highway Patrol, State Radio Communications, the N.D. Department of Transportation, the N.D. Department of Human Services and the N.D. Division of Emergency Management.

On June 30, the Governor, the Adjutant General and the State Director of the N.D. Division of Emergency Management met with officials from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe; Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the lead federal agency fighting the fire; the U.S. Forest Service; and state and local on-scene coordinators.

The North Dakota National Guard provided a Huey helicopter during an aerial surveillance tour by the Governor, local and state officials and media representatives. The Governor dispatched two tanker trucks and two helicopters, equipped water buckets, to help battle fires in Sioux County. In addition, the National Guard offered bulldozer and other heavy equipment to build firebreaks.

The N.D. Highway Patrol has been coordinating transportation needs, providing security and assisting local officials with traffic control. Troopers helped with the coordination of the June 29 Porcupine evacuation.

The N.D. Aeronautics Commissioner has been working with aerial applicators to lineup potential fire response.

A N.D. State Fire Marshal deputy is coordinating firefighting support with rural fire departments.

The N.D. Forest Service Fire Management Coordinator has been working with officials from the BIA, U.S. Forest Service, the State EOC and local fire departments.

State Radio Communications personnel have been providing dispatch and fire monitoring support.

The N.D. Department of Transportation dispatched two 550-gallon tankers to Selfridge. A 3,500-gallon tanker and 6,000-gallon tanker from Minot have been staged at Bismarck. Two tankers from the Devils Lake area will be available July 1.

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe prohibited fireworks and outdoor burning.

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) activated Type II and III Incident Management Teams. These teams include command, operations, logistics and planning personnel. The USFS also dispatched a mop-up crew, comprised of six personnel and three vehicles, to assist with a fire on June 28 Amidon in Slope County.

On June 28, Governor Hoeven led aerial and ground tours of drought stricken areas in North Dakota. The tour includes a low-level flyover of Kidder, Logan, McIntosh, Emmons, Sioux, Grant, Adams, and Hettinger Counties, with ground tours in the communities of Ashley in McIntosh County, Linton in Emmons County and Mott in Adams County.

City of Napoleon officials implemented outdoor water restrictions, effective June 24.

Officials for the Dakota Prairie Grasslands have issued Level 1 fire restrictions for the Sheyenne National Grasslands in Ransom and Richland Counties. Level 1

restrictions remain in effect for Cedar River National Grasslands located in Sioux County. These restrictions prohibit building, maintaining, attending or using a fire or campfire except within a developed recreation site. Smoking is only allowed in areas cleared of flammable materials. Fireworks are prohibited on national grasslands.

The North Dakota State Fire Marshal, State Forester and N.D. Division of Emergency Management issued a news release asking citizens to use caution discharging fireworks especially in light of dry conditions that persist in some parts of the state. Citizens were reminded that the Governor's Proclamation of Fire Danger is still in effect. There are restrictions when using fireworks when the NWS issues a "Very High" or "Extreme" fire danger. On June 30, the DEM Public Affairs Office called media outlets in counties within extreme fire danger category to reiterate that fireworks are prohibited.

The Division of Emergency Management distributed fireworks talking points to local and tribal emergency managers.

7. ASSISTANCE NEEDED: No change from the previous report.
8. OUTSIDE HELP ON SCENE: No change from the previous report.
9. OTHER: Appropriate state, local, tribal, federal and private entity emergency operations plans (EOPs) and procedures have been implemented.

The N.D. Rural Fire Mitigation Guide is posted on the N.D. Division of Emergency Management web site at: <http://www.state.nd.us/dem/>.

Information regarding fire weather forecasts can be found on the National Weather Service (NWS) web site at: <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/bis/fire.htm>.

Situation Reports published by N.D. Division of Emergency Management are posted on the Division's Internet home page. The address is <http://www.state.nd.us/dem>.

Douglas C. Friez, State Director